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★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★

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The Honorable Nathan Manning
Chairman, House Criminal Justice Committee
77 S. High Street, 12th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Manning,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter in support of Sierah's Law (SB 231) sponsored by Senator Randy Gardner. Protecting Ohio's families is the most important job we have in government, and I strongly support creating a violent offender database in Ohio.

Sierah's law would create a violent offender database in Ohio that would be available to qualified law enforcement personnel. Similar to the arson registry already in place, it would give law enforcement officers information about those living in their communities who could affect public safety.

The law would apply to felons released from prison after being convicted of five specific violent offenses; aggravated murder, murder, voluntary manslaughter, abduction, and kidnapping. Several states, including Florida, Montana, Oklahoma, Indiana, Illinois, and Kansas, have laws requiring different groups of convicted felons to register or enroll with local law enforcement and make their locations known after being released from prison.

I appreciate the collaborative efforts of Senator Gardner, the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and interested parties who came together to find a compromise on certain aspects of this bill. Among these compromises is a mandatory ten-year enrollment obligation, with the possibility of an extension at the request of a prosecutor and order by a court if the offender is deemed to be a potential danger to the community. The bill now also lays out a procedure for offenders to rebut the presumption that they must enroll in the database, thus removing their enrollment duties. This compromise was a result of discussions with interested parties who would qualify as "violent offenders" under the statute but were themselves victims of years of violent domestic abuse.

The suspect accused of the murder of 14-year-old Alianna Defreeze in Cleveland and the suspect accused of the murder of 20-year-old student Sierah Joughin in Fulton County had both previously been convicted of numerous violent felonies.

Sadly, there are many other examples of violent criminals released from prison who commit violent felonies soon after their release. For example, Carlton Springer from Cuyahoga County had been sent to prison numerous times after convictions for aggravated robbery, multiple felonious assaults, and felony domestic violence. Only six months after his release from prison in 2015, Springer was arrested and convicted of murdering his girlfriend and was sentenced to life in prison.

Another man, Terrian Christian from Mahoning County, was sent to prison after convictions for aggravated robbery and felonious assault. He was released in March 2015. Seven months later, he

was arrested and later convicted of shooting someone multiple times. He was sentenced to six years in prison after his convictions for felonious assault and having weapons under disability.

Ohio has far too many stories like these. According to a study my office commissioned about violent crime in Ohio, over the last 40 years, 10.9% of all felons in Ohio are responsible for 100% of violent crimes! Furthermore, recidivism data compiled by the U.S. Department of Justice show that 71.3% of inmates released from prison after serving time for a violent offense have been arrested for a new crime within five years.

Creating a statewide violent offender database in Ohio will have a cost. My office is currently responsible for maintaining the sex offender registry. The cost to host the sex offender registry is around \$544,000 per year, plus personnel costs. I believe my office could incorporate a violent offender database within the same system. As a preliminary estimate, the violent offender database would cost \$350,000 to establish and operate the first year with a subsequent annual cost of approximately \$175,000, plus personnel costs.

I strongly encourage the General Assembly to pass Sierah's Law so our law enforcement officers can be aware of violent criminals in their communities who have a higher likelihood of committing other crimes.

Very respectfully yours,



Mike DeWine
Ohio Attorney General